

2
~~5.10.30~~
THE
SUFFICIENCY

OF THE

£.10

30

Scripture - Revelation,
As to the Matter of it.

A
SERMON



Preach'd at the
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of *St. Paul,*
February the 5th. 1⁶⁹⁹₇₀₀.

BEING

The Second, for the Year 1700, of the LECTURE
Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle, Esq;*

By *OFSPRING BLACKALL*, Rector
of *St. Mary Aldermary*, and Chaplain in Ordinary
to His MAJESTY.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *J. Leake*, for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's-Head* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1700.

Not cat

723:90

S^t. LUKE XVI. 29, 30, 31.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets ; let them hear them

And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

TH E first thing which I propounded to do in Discoursing on these Words, was, to endeavour to shew, that the present *Standing Revelation* of God's Will, contained in the *Books* of the *Old* and *New Testament* is abundantly sufficient to persuade Men to Repentance, if they are not unreasonably blind and obstinate. *They have Moses and the Prophets, (they have also Christ and his Apostles,) let them hear them.*

And if that *Standing Revelation* which God hath made to us of his Will in the *Holy Scriptures* can upon any Account be thought *insufficient* to effect this Design, it must be, I think, either, 1. Because no *Standing Revelation* can be sufficient for this Purpose ; Or, 2. Because there are some particular *Defects* in that Revelation which we have in the *Holy Scriptures* which render it not so sufficient for this Purpose, as 'tis possible a *Standing Revelation* might be.

I have, therefore, in a former Discourse upon these Words, endeavoured to shew in general, that a *Standing Revelation* of God's Will may be so well contrived, and so well attested as to be *sufficient* for this Purpose.

I proceed now, in the second place,

2. To Consider whether that *Standing Revelation* which we have in the *Holy Scriptures*, be such a Revelation; whether it be *sufficient* to persuade Men to Repentance, and fully to direct them in the Way to Happiness; Or, whether there be not some particular *Defects* in this Revelation, which render it not so *sufficient* for this Purpose as 'tis possible a *Standing Revelation* might be.

And if there be any such *Defect* in the *Holy Scripture*, it must be either in the *Matter* of it, or in the *Proof* of it: And if it be in the *Matter* of it, it must be, either that it does not give us *sufficient Directions* what to do, or that it does not propose *sufficient Motives* to persuade Men to do what it requires.

And therefore in speaking to this Head, I shall shew, (1.) That the *Holy Scripture* gives us *sufficient Directions* what to do. (2.) That the *Motives* which the *Scripture* proposes, are *sufficient* to persuade us to do what it requires; And, (3.) That we have *sufficient Reason* given us to convince us of the *Truth* and *Authority* of the *Holy Scripture*, and consequently of all the Doctrines which are taught by it.

(1.) I shall shew that the *Holy Scripture* gives us *sufficient Directions* what to do.

And of this there can be little Doubt among those that believe the divine Inspiration and Authority of the *Holy Scripture*; because to them its own Testimony

mony of its own *sufficiency* is a Proof thereof beyond all Exception. For, if, as the *Apostle* says, 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. it be *profitable for Doctrine and for Reproof, and for Correction, and for Instruction in Righteousness*; it is plainly profitable for all the Purposes for which we can desire a divine Revelation. And, if, as he says in the next Verse, it was given to make *perfect the Man of God* (that is, the Man whose Business it is to teach and instruct others;) and *thoroughly to furnish him unto all good Works*, it cannot be *deficient* in delivering all such *Rules and Directions* as are necessary to be given by a Pastor to the People committed to his Care. And, if, as the same *Apostle* had said at the 15th. Verse of that Chapter, it be *able to make us wise unto Salvation*, we have no Reason to desire to be wiser than this excellent Book can make us. And if all this could truly be said by the *Apostle*, before the *Canon* of the *New Testament* was compleated; if it could be said by him of those *Holy Scriptures* which *Timothy* had known from a Child, that is, of the *Books* of the *Old Testament* only, much more may it be now said of the *Books* of both *Testaments* together.

But to speak at large of this Point, at present, would be too great a Digression from the Design of these *Lectures*, which were intended only against *Infidels*, not against any *Sett* of *Christians*; and such they pretend to be; such (because they hold the Foundation *Christ Jesus*,) they may in Charity be allow'd to be, who do chiefly differ from us in this Article, and deny the *sufficiency* of *Scripture*, only because they are resolved to maintain some gainful *Doctrines* and *Practices* of their own Church, which they are sensible have no Warrant from *Scripture*, and so can be maintained no other

other Way but by affirming that they have been delivered down to them by Tradition, and that unwritten Tradition is a necessary Supplement to the written Word, and of equal Authority with it.

For between us and *Infidels* who reject the *Scripture*, the *Sufficiency* of the *Scripture* as a *Rule* of Faith and Manners, is hardly Matter of Controversie: for these do not reject the *Scripture* because it teaches too little, but rather because it teaches too much: because it teaches Doctrines above their Reason, and commands such Duties as they do not like to practise; and if it taught less than it does, they would be more ready to own its divine Authority.

But nevertheless even these Men (that they may leave no Stone unturned) will be sometimes discouraging upon this Point; and altho' those *Books* of *Holy Scripture* which are now extant, and which are now generally receiv'd, do teach much more than they themselves are willing to believe and practise, yet, that they may, as much as they can, unsettle the Belief of others, do not stick to argue against the Christian Religion from this Topick, and to affirm that the *Books* of *Holy Scripture* which are now receiv'd do not contain the whole Will of God. For there were, say they, in former times, several other *Gospels*, and *Epistles*, and other *Tracts*, designed to instruct Men in the Christian Religion, which were written by the *Apostles* or other inspired Men, and which were consequently of the same Authority, in themselves, with those which are now receiv'd into the *Canon*, of which nevertheless we have nothing now left, but the Names and Titles, or some imperfect and uncertain Fragments; so that it may well be doubted, whether

then those few *Books* which are now remaining, are *sufficient* to instruct us in all necessary Points of Knowledge and Practice. And of this Matter of Fact, there is, they say, some Evidence even from the *Scripture* its self: For St. *Luke*, in the Beginning of his Gospel, takes Notice, that *many before him, had taken in Hand to set forth a Declaration of those things which were surely believed among Christians*; that is, had written and published Narratives of the Life, Actions, Miracles, Preaching, Death and Resurrection of our Saviour. But there are no Histories of this Kind, no *Gospels* now extant, that were written before St. *Luke's*, except only St. *Matthew's* and St. *Mark's*; and if there had been no more extant at that time, it would have been very improper, they say, for the *Evangelist* to have said, that *many* had written upon this Subject, when he spake only of *those two*. And that there was Matter enough for several such Narratives (so that tho' they were very different *Gospels*, they might nevertheless be all true) we are told by St. *John*, who wrote his Gospel the last of the Four *Evangelists*, Joh. 20. 30. *Many other Signs truly did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book*; and again, Ch. 21. Vers. 25. *There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written everyone, I suppose that even the World its self could not contain the Books that should be written.*

Now if it be true, that there were several *other Books* formerly extant, but which are now lost, that were written by the *Apostles* and other inspired Men, and consequently by divine Inspiration; either these were needless when written, (and it is unreasonable to suppose that any *Book* written by divine Inspiration was
needless)

needless) or else the Loss of these *Books* is a Loss to Religion; and we cannot be well assured, that those which we have now remaining do *sufficiently* instruct us in all Points of Christian Faith and Practice.

But admit the Truth of this Matter of Fact, *viz.* that *more Books* were written by the *Apostles*, or inspired Men, than are now extant, (which I will not now dispute, because I think it needless; because I think it may be granted without any Prejudice to the Christian Cause; altho' there be none, or at most but very slender Evidence of it;) nay, admit more than is upon any good Grounds alledged; *viz.* not only that several, but that every one of the *Apostles* and immediate Disciples of *Christ*, every one that had heard him Preach, and had been a Witness of his Life and Miracles and Resurrection, and had received the Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, did write a distinct *Gospel* giving an Account of some of the most remarkable Passages of our Saviour's Life which he had been a Witness of; and did likewise as he had Occasion write *Epistles* or other *Traacts* for the Use and Instruction of the Christian Church; every one of all which *Books*, if they were now extant, and as well attested as the *Books* of the *New Testament* are, would be of equal Authority with them, because dictated by the same Spirit, by which all the *Apostles* were led into all Truth, and had all things that *Jesus* had spoken brought to their Remembrance; yet, I say, it would by no Means follow from hence, either that those *Books* which are now lost (if indeed there are any lost that were written by the *Apostles*) were needless when they were written; or that those which do now remain are not *sufficient*. And a very little Consideration of the State of things
as

as it was then, and as it is now, will make this which I have said very plain.

For the Case then was thus: The Gospel of *Christ* was to be preached to the whole World by a few Persons who had been Eye-witnesses of his Miracles, and were enabled by the Power of the Holy Ghost to confirm their Testimony of him by doing the like Miracles themselves; And that this great Work might be accomplished within the Term of their Life, it was necessary that they should quickly disperse themselves into all Parts of the World, one going this Way and another that, according as they had agreed among themselves, or were directed by the Spirit; And in this Division of Countries, every one had a large Province assigned to him, so that having much Work to do in a little Time, he could not well stay long in one Place; And upon this account it might be very proper for him after he had preached the Gospel in one City, and made a good number of Converts, and ordained Elders and established a Christian Church there, when he went thence to leave behind him in Writing the Sum of what he had before preached among them, for the Help of their Memories, for the Direction of their Pastors, and to prevent any Mis-representation that might afterwards be made of his Doctrine by ignorant or designing Men; And after he was gone from thence, he might have frequent Occasion to send them Letters, either to confirm them in their Faith, or to caution them against some Errors which he had heard were springing up among them, or to correct some Fault in their Discipline or Manners.

By this Means, I say, it might well enough be (tho' there be no Evidence that it was so) that in the first

Age of Christianity, there might be, besides occasional *Letters*, as many distinct *Gospels* as there were *Apostles*; every One writing a *Gospel* for the proper Use of those Churches which he himself had planted, and in the Language that was best known to them. And this, if it was done, might be no more than might be then necessary, when it was not so easy as it is now (since the Increase of Commerce and Navigation, and the Invention of Printing) to communicate and disperse the Books that are Published in one Country, to other Countries that are far distant. Besides, if this could have been done then, it can't well be supposed that a *Gospel* written by any *other* of the *Apostles*, who had never been in that Province or Division, and of whom they had never heard perhaps more than only his Name, should be at first of so great Authority to them, as a *Gospel* written by that very *Apostle*, by whose Ministry they had been converted, and of whose Miracles they themselves had been Witnesses.

Thus it might be; (and if it was so, it might be agreeable to the divine Wisdom and Goodness so to order it) that before those *Books* of the *New Testament* which we now have could be well dispersed, and upon good Attestation receiv'd in all Christian Countries, some particular Churches, and especially those most remote from *Judea*, should have for their present Use, *other Books* written by some *other* of the *Apostles*, containing the same *Form of sound Words*, and relating the same things concerning the Life and Doctrine of our Saviour that these do.

And that some of those many *Books* which might be written by the *Apostles* or other inspired Men
upon

upon this Subject, should be lost, is no Marvel at all: 'tis rather a Wonder (considering the Poverty of the first Christians, and the constant Persecutions they were then under, and the many Revolutions of Government that have been in *Christendom* since that time,) that so many as we have now left could be preserved for so many Ages before Printing was found out. And those were of all the most like to be lost, which were published in rude and barbarous Countries, and which were written in some Language that was peculiar to one Nation only: And those the most easie, and consequently the most probable to be preserved, which were published in the learned Part of the World, and written in the most learned Language then in Use.

But altho' a greater Number of *inspired Books* than are now extant, might be necessary in the first Age of Christianity; before the Christian Churches, then newly planted in all Countries of the then known World, could have Communication with one another; it cannot be argued from hence that *those Books* which we have now remaining are not *sufficient* for the present Time, and for all the Time that has passed since the *other Books* were *lost*; But rather, it may very reasonably be presumed, that there was nothing more, for Substance, in *those Books*, which are supposed to be *lost*, than there is in these which are now remaining; so that the Loss of them may be no real Loss or Detriment to Religion, and those which remain and are now receiv'd in all Christian Churches, may be abundantly *sufficient* to instruct us in all Points of Christian Faith and Practice.

Luke 1. 4.

John 2. 22.

And there is indeed no Reason to think they are not, seeing some of those single Books which we have now, were written for this very Purpose, were designed as *Compendiums* of the whole Christian Institution: For St. *Luke* wrote his Gospel, that *Theophilus*, might know the Certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed; And if this was the *Evangelist's* Design, it can't be supposed but that he thought he had put into his Gospel whatever was necessary or very material: And St. *John* in the same Place where he acknowledges that he had omitted the Relation of many things which *Jesus* did, says that he had written the things contained in his Gospel, that Men might believe that *Jesus* is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have Life through his Name: By which it appears that he thought he himself had written enough in his Gospel to persuade Men to believe in Christ, and to direct them in the Way to eternal Life. There being therefore in those Books of the *New Testament* which we now have, several Abridgments of the whole Christian Doctrine, it cannot with any Reason be pretended, that all these Books together are not sufficient fully to instruct us therein.

Besides; The Gospel of Christ that was preached suppose, by St. *Thomas* in *India*, or by St. *Simon* in *Africa*, or by any other of the *Apostles* in Countries remote from *Judea*, or without the Bounds of the Roman Empire, was undoubtedly the very same Gospel that was preached by St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*, or those other of the *Apostles* whose Books are now extant, and received by the *Catholick Church*; for they

they were all taught by the same Master, *Christ*; and were all enlightned by the same Holy Ghost: so that if any of them did, (as 'tis reported they did) write any *Gospels* for the present Use of those particular Churches which they had planted; tho' they might be somewhat different from any of the *four Gospels* which we now have, in the Expression, or perhaps in the Relation of some particular Passages of our Saviour's Life, which our *Evangelists* have omitted: (just as the *four Gospels* which we now have, do differ from one another) yet for Substance they must needs have been the same with these, and with one another, if indeed they were all true Relations of the Matters of which the Authors thereof had been Witnesses; so that if we had them all now, they could all together teach us no other Doctrines than are taught in the *Books of the New Testament*.

Nevertheless, I do not deny but that if we had more Books of this Kind than we have; that if we had all the Books that were written by the *Apostles*, or their immediate Successors who had been taught by them, they might be of very good Use to us, to help us to understand more readily and easily those Books which we have (as now we receive from some Portions of *Holy Scripture*, great Light, to help us to understand, and to put a right Interpretation upon others :) But perhaps it was for this very Reason that the Providence of God did order no more to be written, than were written, or has suffered those to be lost that are supposed to be lost, that it might cost us some Pains and Study to understand our Religion; that so our Knowledge as
well

well as our Practice being in some Measure the Fruit of our own Industry, might be a proper Subject of Reward.

In short, That there were *more Books* in the first Age of Christianity, written by *Apostles* or other inspired Men than are now extant, or than if extant can be well proved to be of their Writing, is a Point which I believe cannot be now upon any certain Evidence either affirmed or denied: But if it be granted, I say however, there is no Reason to infer from thence, that those which we now have are not *sufficient*. For if there be a God and a Providence, and if there be any Truth in the Scripture-Declarations of the Love of God to Mankind, and that *he would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*, most certainly the necessary Means of Mens Salvation is a proper Subject of the divine Care: And if so; it can't be thought but that the same good Providence which (as is now supposed) took Care for the *writing of more Books* when more might be necessary, has likewise taken Care for the *Preservation of so many of these Books* as are now *sufficient*.

Or if the Men we are now arguing with, will not grant that there is such a particular Providence of God; yet if they will but allow that God is just: that he is not a *hard Master*, expecting to *reap where he has not sown*, I think they must allow that all things necessary to our Salvation, not knowable by Reason, are taught in the *Books of Holy Scripture* which we now have, because there are no *other Books extant* which we have reason to receive and accept as divine Revelation.

Or

Or if they deny this, it will lie upon them to produce those other *Books* which we ought to receive besides these, and to give good Evidence to the World of their divine Authority. Which when they have done; or if they shall but only shew that there is *as good* Reason to receive them as these; We must own our selves to blame, if we shall not then take them also into the *Canon of Scripture*.

But till that shall be done, what hath been already said is enough to shew that the *Holy Scripture* is a compleat *Rule* both of Faith and Manners. Especially considering (as was noted before) that when-ever the *Insufficiency of Scripture* in this Respect, is urged by those who do not believe the *Scripture* (which are the Persons I have now to deal with,) it can be only for Cavilling sake: the true Reason of their Backwardness to receive it as a divine Revelation, being, not because it teaches not enough, but because it teaches more than they are willing to believe, and commands more than they are disposed to practise. For I cannot imagine that these Men do truly desire *more Duty* than is laid upon them in the *Books of Scripture* now received by the Christian Church; But what they may most reasonably be thought to desire, is, either some *better Encouragement* to undertake that difficult Task which the *Scripture* lays upon them, or some *better Evidence* that the *Scripture* is a divine Revelation.

I proceed now therefore to the second thing propounded, which was,

(2.) To

(2.) To shew that the *Motives* which the *Scripture* proposes are *sufficient* to persuade Men to do what it requires.

Now *Hopes* and *Fears* are the great Springs of Action; and the greater the Good is we hope for, or the Evil we fear, the stronger do they move and incline us to Action; And therefore how difficult soever the Undertaking be, (so it be but possible;) if the *Motives* are proportioned to the Difficulty, they must be granted to be *sufficient Inducements* to undertake it.

But that the Task or Business required of us, is possible to be done, needs not to be proved now, because it must be granted by those who say they believe they should be persuaded to do what is required, if they had *better Encouragement*; for no *Arguments* or *Motives* whatsoever can reasonably persuade a Man to undertake a thing that he believes impossible.

Supposing it therefore possible; I say that whatsoever Difficulty there really is, or we may apprehend there is, in a Christian Life; if any *Motives* that could possibly be proposed to us can be thought *sufficient* to induce us to undertake it; most evidently, those *Motives* which the *Gospel* proposes, are so; because better or greater cannot be so much as conceived or imagined; seeing both the good things which it promises to persuade us to Virtue, and the evil things which it threatens to deter us from Sin, are, as to the *Matter* of them, the greatest that we are capable of enjoying or suffering; and consequently the most probable to raise our Hopes, and to excite our Fears to the highest Pitch.

For

For the Arguments that do most strongly persuade us to any thing, are from Interest; from the Profit and Advantage we shall reap by doing it; from the Tendency it has to make us happy; and Happiness consists in being perfectly free from all Pain and Trouble and Vexation; and in the full and free Enjoyment of whatsoever is pleasing and delightful to us.

But now both these the *Gospel* gives *Assurance* of to all those that believe and obey it; that is, that they shall thereby be freed from that intolerable Pain and Misery, which the Wicked and Unbelievers shall be condemned to, and also that they shall thereby be instated in the perfectest and compleatest Happiness both of Body and Soul; In a Happiness far greater than any they do or can enjoy now; nay, in a Happiness much greater than any they can now have so much as a Conception or Idea of in their Minds. *For* ^{1 Cor. 2. 9.} *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man the Things that God hath prepared for them that love him.*

But there is, besides, a *remarkable Circumstance* which does much enhance the Value of any Good, and likewise much aggravate the Evil of any Pain or Misery; viz. its *Duration*: For how great soever the Good or Evil proposed to persuade us to any thing, are in themselves; yet if they be but of short Continuance, if they will soon expire and be at an End, we reckon it not worth while to be at much Pains to obtain such a short-lived Good, or to avoid such a transient Evil; But in this Respect also, the *Motives* both of Hope and of Fear which the *Gospel* proposes to us, do far surpass all those Persuasives or Inducements which

Sin can offer : for the most we can hope to escape by the Commission of any Sin, is the Pain and Suffering of a few Weeks or Years, or a temporal Death ; which last, yet, we cannot be so vain as to hope to escape clearly, for we can at most but delay it for a short Season ; And on the other side, the greatest Good we can propose to our selves, or so much as hope to obtain by any Sin, is the Pleasure of a short Life : In which Hope, Men are likewise very often most sadly disappointed ; their sinful Gratifications commonly bringing with them, or drawing after them, much more Trouble and Vexation even in this World, than the little Pleasure they can reap from them is sufficient to compensate for. But if it were not so ; If the Pleasures of Sin were certain and sincere ; yet they are but for a Moment ; They can be but short, because our Life its self is but short ; being (as St. James says) *a Vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

1 Tim. 4. 14.

But the *Motives* of both kinds, which the Gospel proposes, have in this Respect also, (that is, in Respect of the *Duration* of the Good or Evil proposed) all the Advantage that is possible. For the Misery we shall escape, and the Blessedness we shall attain, by yielding Belief and Obedience to the Gospel, are, both of them, of *eternal and endless Duration.* A Worm that never dieth, a Fire that never shall be quenched ; Everlasting Punishment ; Eternal Damnation ; Everlasting Fire ; Everlasting Destruction ; The Blackness of Darkness, for ever ; A Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where they shall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever ; and where the smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever, and ever. These are the Evils which

Mark 9. 46, 48.

Matth. 25. 46.

Mark 3. 29.

Matth. 18. 8.

2 Thess. 1. 9.

Jude 13.

Rev. 20. 10.

14. 11.

which the *Gospel* threatens to Sin : And if these be not *sufficient* to deterr Men from it, what can be *sufficient* ? What *Evil* can that Man be supposed to be afraid of, who is not afraid of *everlasting Burning* ? A *greater Evil* cannot be threatned ; and he who is not scared by this, would certainly be less scared by the Threatning of a less Evil. And on the other side, *Everlasting Life* ; a *Crown that fadeth not away* ; a *Kingdom that cannot be moved* ; an *eternal Weight of Glory* ; *Fulness of Joy in the Presence of God* ; and *Pleasures for evermore at his right Hand* ; these are the good things promised to Obedience ; And could greater things be promised than these ? could we our selves if we were put to desire what we would, desire more ? and if the Promise of unspeakable and everlasting Blessedness, be not *sufficient* to prevail with us to undertake a Godly and Christian Life, certainly nothing can be *sufficient*. If God should make never so many Revelations of his Will to Mankind, he could not propose greater Encouragement to Obedience, than he has done already in the *Gospel* : And if those good things which he has promised, do not move us, 'tis not because they are not great enough to move a wise and considering Man, but because we are so bent upon Sin that we will not give way to any Considerations that might serve to restrain us from it.

In a Word ; The *Gospel Motives* to Repentance and Obedience comprehend all that we can fear or hope for ; so far therefore as Fears or Hopes can work upon us, there is plainly nothing wanting in that *Standing Revelation* that God has made of his Will, by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and especially by *Christ* and his

Apostles, to make it successfull, that is, to persuade Men to Repentance, if they will but hear what they say and give Credit to it.

But 'tis not, perhaps the *Infidels* will say, a *better Rule* that they Want, than the *Scripture* is, or *better Motives* to persuade them to lead their Lives according to it, than the *Scripture* proposes; but what they chiefly want, is some *better Evidence*, some greater Certainty of the *Truth* of the *Scripture*.

This therefore was what I propounded to do in the next place; *viz.* To shew that we have *sufficient Reason* given us to convince us of the *Truth* and *Authority* of the *Holy Scripture*, and consequently of all the *Doctrines* which are taught by it.

But because the handling of this Point would take up too much Time, I shall chuse to deferr it; and conclude this present Discourse with an earnest Exhortation to all those that do sincerely believe the Gospel, to consider often and seriously of those *great Motives* which it proposes to persuade Men.

For tho' we live in an Age of great *Infidelity*; wherein some are bold enough to strike at the very Foundation of all Religion, and to dispute at least, if not deny the most evident and undeniable Truths of it; and others think they pay Respect enough to the common Reason and Judgment of Mankind, if they do but grant themselves to be *Deists*; and wherein, even among those that openly profess the Christian Religion, there is in a great many a Spice and Tincture of Atheism and Infidelity; and tho' they do not actually disbelieve the Gospel truths, yet they believe them so coldly and faintly, that their Faith may rather be called an Inclination to believe, than a full Persuasion;

Persuasion; I say, even in this incredulous and unbelieving Age, I am nevertheless verily persuaded, that for one Man that is ruin'd by *Infidelity*, many hundreds are ruined by *Thoughtlessness* and *Inconsideration*; that where there is one that is wicked, because he believes nothing of the *Gospel-motives*, nor that there is any such Place or State as Heaven or Hell, there are a great many that do believe these things, and yet continue in their wicked Course, because they never take any time seriously to consider what Heaven and Hell are; and that vast, that infinite difference that there is between these two States; and how much it behoves them to use all Diligence to attain that, and to avoid this.

Leaving therefore those who believe little or nothing of these things to my following Discourses, wherein I hope to prove the *Truth* of the *Gospel Revelation*, beyond all reasonable Exception; I shall now address my self to you that do believe these things, and who, every time you meet together in the Church do repeat all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and declare your Assent thereto. And what I would desire of you is; that you would frequently think of those things which you profess to believe, that you would meditate much and often thereupon, that you would seriously consider the Meaning thereof.

Particularly, That *Summary* of the *Gospel Motives* to Faith and Repentance before spoken of, that great and last Article of the Christian Creed, *The Life everlasting*; Consider what it means, and do not content your selves only with saying every Day that you do believe an *everlasting Life after this*, but meditate likewise every Day, or very frequently at least, what
an

an *everlasting Life* is, and of what *Sort* and *Kind* that everlasting Life will be.

Now *Life* is a state of *Sensation*; By *this* a Living Body is distinguished from a dead Carcass, that the living Body feels what is done unto it, and is affected thereby either with Pain or Pleasure; whereas a dead Carcass is not capable of either, hath no Sense or Feeling of any thing. When therefore in repeating the Creed, we declare that we believe we shall live again, after our death, the meaning is, that we shall be hereafter in such a State of *Sensation* as we are in now; that in that Life we shall be as *sensible* of Pain or Pleasure, as we are in this Life.

But then, what makes the great Difference between this Life and that, is, that *this* is *short, transient* and *momentary*, that if it be pleasant, it is soon over, and that if it be painfull it will not last long; whereas *that*, such as it is once, such it will *ever* be; for that's the Meaning of a *Life everlasting*; 'tis a Life that will *never be ended*; A Life that will *continue to all Eternity*.

And now that we come to speak of *Eternity*, tho' the Word has a fix'd Meaning; yet how are our Thoughts lost and bewildered when we set our selves to meditate thereupon? When we speak of a thousand, or ten thousand, or even of a Million of Years, we have some Notion of what we say; but when we come to multiply these thousands, and Millions, by ten thousands, or ten Millions, or by Millions of Millions, our Thoughts are not capacious enough to conceive, and our Mouths want Words to express that infinite Length of Time which these Numbers do comprehend; And yet all that these
Numbers

Numbers denote, is nothing in Comparison with *Eternity*.

If the whole Sea were to run out Drop by Drop, what a prodigious Length of Time would this take up? and yet in time this would be done; and they that live for ever would live to see the vast Caverns of the Ocean without one Drop of Water left in them: And which is more yet, there would be no Part of their Eternity then spent, they would then be as far from dying as they were at first.

Or if only once in ten thousand Years, one of the smallest Sands or Dusts were to be taken from the Earth, they that live for ever would live to see all this vast Bulk of the Earth by these slow and imperceptible Degrees wholly removed, not so much as a Grain or Atome of it left; Nay, and even in this prodigious, this unconceivable Length of Time, their Life would not be in the least diminished, they would have the same boundless Eternity still before them that they had, when the first Sand was taken away.

But what do I speak of these little Numbers, these Moments of Time, as they may truly be called, in Comparison with Eternity? For even all those Years in which the whole Earth might be removed, if only one single smallest Dust thereof were to be taken away once in ten thousand Years, I say, all these Years may be expressed in Figures, in a Line of a few Inches long; But if the whole Expanse of Heaven were written quite over with Figures from the Top to the Bottom, and from one Side to the other, even all these Figures, tho' set so close that there was not Room left for one more, would not denote or express *Eternity*; And when all these numberless Millions

lions of Years were spent, He that lives for ever, would be (as it were) but just then beginning to live; and his Sight and Prospect of the Time before him, would be still as boundless as ever.

Thus you see what is *eternal Life*; Or rather, you see what *it is not*; It is a Length of Time that cannot be expressed in Words, or signified by Figures, or conceived in Thought: It is a Length of Time to which all that we can have any positive Notion of, bears no Proportion.

And when we believe that we shall live *such a Life*, after this short Life is over; does it not highly behove us to think of it now; and to make the best Provision that is possible that we may be happy in it?

And this leads me to the other Branch of Meditation on this Subject, which we ought likewise frequently and seriously to dwell upon in our Minds; namely of *what Sort and Kind* this eternal Life will be.

And as 'tis *Life*, 'tis (as was said before) a State of *Sensation*; and as it is an *everlasting Life*, 'tis a State in which we shall for *ever* feel our selves, either in *Pain* or at *Ease*.

And if there were no more in it than this; tho' the *Pain* we shall then endure were the least of those Pains wherewith we are now afflicted, a little Pain or Aking of one Joint or Member only; Or tho' the *Pleasure* we shall then enjoy, were one of the least of those Pleasures wherewith we are now delighted; yet when we have added *Eternity* to these, what an infinite Difference is there between these two States? And how well must we needs think it worth all the Pains and Labour that we can take in this World, to secure to our selves a Portion in that better Sort of everlasting

lasting Life, in that Life in which there is no *Pain*, tho' there be but little *Pleasure*?

But still our Thoughts are short; we have not yet a just Notion of the Difference between these two States. For if we believe the *Scripture* (and I speak now to those that do believe it,) *that everlasting Pain* which the wicked will be condemned to, is not a light or gentle Pain; but the sharpest, the acutest, the most tormenting that can be endured; and that *eternal Joy* which we have a good Hope of by the Gospel, is likewise the greatest, the fullest, the compleatest that we are capable of; for in representing the former to us, the *Scripture* all along expresses the Torments of Hell by such Pains as are here most afflicting to us; as the Biting and Gnawing of a *Worm*, the being beaten with *Stripes*, the noysomness of *Brimstone*, and the Burning of *Fire*; And on the other side, when it would represent to us the Happiness of the Blessed, it does it by resembling the heavenly Joys, to such Pleasures as do here upon Earth most sensibly delight us, such as are the Pleasures of a spacious, rich and commodious Dwelling, of the choicest Delicacies to please the Taste, of the rarest Melody to delight the Ear, of a Crown, and a Kingdom, and an exceeding Weight of Glory, and of whatever else can gratifie or please any of our Senses.

Now tho' these Representations or Descriptions of Hell and Heaven are not perhaps to be understood literally; the *Scripture* herein speaking, not according to the Strictness of Truth, but according to our present Capacities and Apprehensions, who have now very little Notion of any Pain or Pleasure but what affects the Senses of our Body; yet thus much may most
D certainly

certainly be concluded from those Descriptions of these two States which we meet with in Scripture; that both the Torments of Hell and the Joys of Heaven, are as great as they can possibly be; far beyond any thing that we now feel or enjoy, or can have any Notion of; And in a Word, that as the *Pain* of Hell is *endless*, so it is likewise *intolerable*, and that as the *Joy* of Heaven is *perpetual*, so it is likewise *unspeakable and full of Glory*.

And now after this short tho' very imperfect Representation of these two vastly different States of Men in that other, and everlasting Life that will begin when this is over; I think I may fairly ask again, What God could have done more, either to deterr us from Sin, than to threaten Hell torments to those that live in it; or to encourage us to Obedience, than to promise to those that continue in well doing, the unspeakable Happiness of Heaven? Certainly, if these *Motives* will not prevail upon us, no other can be proposed, that would prevail.

Nay further; Tho' I have hitherto spoken to you as to Christians, which believe the Scripture, and that there will certainly be another Life after this, even such a Life as I have been speaking of, an *everlasting Life* of *perfect Happiness*, or *extreme Misery*; yet if you have at all attended to, and are any whit affected by that Representation that I have made to you, of the *Pains* of *Hell*, and of the *Joys* of *Heaven*, and of the *Eternity* of both; I should now dare to address my self to you, even tho' I thought you believed very little of these things; and methinks I should not doubt, but that I might prevail with you, and persuade you to *Repentance*, by these *Gospel Motives* of *Heaven* and *Hell*;

Hell; even altho' the *Revelation* thereof were not *certain* and *undoubted*, altho' there were some *just Reason* to question the *Truth* of them.

For put the Case that it is very *uncertain* whether there will be an eternal Life or no; Nay, put the Case that it is ten to one, that it is much more probable, that there will not be any such Life after this; Yet when we consider what *Eternity* is, and what a vast *Difference* there is between living in *perfect Joy*, and in *everlasting Burning*; and when we consider withall the *Shortness* of this present Life; and how *little* we can lose in it by abstaining from Sin; and how *little* we can suffer in it, by the strictest Holiness and Virtue; even the bare *Possibility* that there will be an eternal Life, tho' we had no certain Revelation, and no other very good Assurance given us of it, would be abundantly *sufficient* to deterr us from Sin, and to stir us up to well-doing. For if we live well here, and there be really an eternal Life, it will be happy for us that we have made this Preparation for it; but if there should indeed be no other Life after this, we shall be then no Losers by what we have done; we shall be then in as good a Condition, as others will be in who did not believe it, nor live in Expectation of it; And all that Trouble which the Exercise of Piety and Virtue now costs us, is not worth speaking of; it is no more than we ought in Reason and Prudence to be at, altho' at the same time we believed it to be very uncertain whether there would be any such eternal Life or no.

For this is what we call and account Wisdom in all other Cases; *viz.* to provide not only against *Certainties* or high Probabilities, but (when it may easily and

conveniently be done) even against *Possibilities* too. We reckon him an unwise Man for the World, who being in a good Way of getting, spends all as fast as it comes in, when he has no present Need to spend so much; and lays up nothing against old Age, when, if he lives to it, he will be past his Labour, and not in a Capacity to get enough to support himself: And yet of all those that do wisely make some Provision for old Age, not one in ten perhaps lives to it. But nevertheless the bare *Possibility* that a Man may live to old Age, and the very great Inconveniences that he will suffer, if he shall have nothing then to live upon, make it very adviseable for every one of the ten, to lay up somewhat, (if he can do it) against that time; And he, of the ten, whose only Lot it will be to live to be old, is not a wiser Man for making such Provision, than the other nine are, who yet, in the Event, will be never the better for their Labour.

Put case therefore that there is the same, or even a much greater *Uncertainty* whether there will be an eternal Life after this; yet when we consider *what* an eternal Life is; when we consider, that if there be a Heaven, and we can procure our Portion to be there; we shall be happy, infinitely and unspeakably happy to eternal Ages; And that if there be a Hell, and we do not take Care to avoid it; our Lot will be extremely miserable, and we shall be *tormented Day and Night, for ever and ever, in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*: And when we consider withal, the very *little Trouble*, in Comparison, that it will cost us to attain that and to avoid this; that 'tis but the Labour of a few Years, and that the most we can suffer by it, is the Loss of a little Sensual Pleasure, for which, after this
Life

Life is over, we should be never the better ; or the enduring of some little Pain or Hardship which will be soon over, and for which, if no Good should ever come of it after this Life, we shall however be then never the worse ; Considering, I say, thus, the infinitely vast and wide Difference, that there is between being eternally happy and eternally miserable, 'tis enough that it is *possible*, 'tis more than enough, that 'tis *probable* that there will be such a state ; and if we neglect to make Provision for it, because we are not *absolutely certain* that it will be, it is plain, that we do not act so prudently in this, as we do in other Cases that are of infinitely less Moment and Concern to us ; and that (as our Saviour says) *The Children of this World, are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.*

Now this is the most that the professed *Atheists* or *Infidels* can pretend ; They'll say perhaps, that for their own parts, they do not believe the Being of a God, or a Judgment, or a Life to come ; and that they do not see any good Reason to believe these things ; forasmuch as all the Proofs that are brought for them, do, in their Judgment, fall short of Demonstration ; and they are resolved not to believe them, till such Proof thereof shall be offered, as they can make no Exception against ; not till they shall see with their own Eyes that there is a Heaven and a Hell, or till they shall have a Messenger sent to them from thence on purpose to assure them thereof : And be it so as they say, that there is not an absolute Certainty of the Truth of these things, that we have not yet such a sure Proof of them, as ocular or mathematical Demonstration would be ; yet this is the most they can say, they themselves cannot pretend that there is any Demonstration on the other side.

They

They are not sure, they say, that there will be *another Life*, or that it will be *everlasting*; Well: but are they sure that there will not be such a Life? is it absurd or impossible that there should be such a Life? this I'm sure they can't say; and all that they have yet dared to say, is only that those Proofs thereof, that we rely upon, are not, in their Opinion, *sufficient*.

But suppose them as *insufficient* as they can think them; yet still, if they are not *sufficient* to prove the *Certainty*, they may be *sufficient* to prove the *Probability* of what they are brought to prove; or if not so; yet still a future Life, if it be not *certain*, nay if it be not *probable*, however may be *possible*; And if it be only *possible* that we may *live for ever*; and that we may be *eternally happy*, or *eternally miserable*; this *Possibility* alone, (considering what an infinite Difference there is between these two States,) ought in reason to put us upon taking the best Care we can, that if there be an eternal Life, we may be eternally happy in it.

But after all, our Proof of this and other great Truths of our Religion, is not so very weak and slender as these Men would represent it; It is indeed as good as the Nature of the thing will bear; and he's an unreasonable Man that requires a better Proof of any thing than it is capable of.

This therefore is what I should now in the next Place, proceed to do; *viz.* (3.) To shew, that there is *sufficient Reason* to give *Credit* to the *Scripture*, wherein these Truths are plainly taught. But this being too large a Subject to be handled now, I have already said, I would deferr it to the next Opportunity.

F I N I S.

Books Printed for Walter Kettilby at the Bishop's-Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable the House of Commons at *St. Margaret's Westminster*, Jan. 30th.

The Sufficiency of a Standing Revelation; A Sermon Preached at the Cathedral Church of *St. Paul's*, Jan. 1st. 1722. being the first for the Year 1700. of the Lecture Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq; These Two by *Ospring Blackall*, Rector of *St. Mary Aldermay*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

A Persuasive to Prayer; A Sermon Preach'd before the King at *St. James's*.

A Sermon Preach'd before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled in the Abby Church at *Westminster*, Jan. 30th.

Fifteen Sermons Preached on several Occasions; the Last of which was never before Printed. These Three by the most Reverend Father in God, *John Lord Arch-Bishop of York*, Primate of *England*, and Metropolitan.

The Faith and Practice of a Church of *England* Man.

A False Faith not Justified by Care for the Poor; Prov'd in a Sermon Preach'd at *St. Paul's Church*.

Mysteries in Religion Vindicated, or the Filiation Deity and Satisfaction of our Saviour asserted against *Socinians* and others; with Occasional Reflections on several late Pamphlets. These Two by *Luke Milbourn*, a Presbyter of the Church of *England*.

There is now in the Press Two Sermons of *Mr. Young's*, about Nature and Grace, Preach'd at *Whitehall*.